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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Housing and Community Services Committee</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 8</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> April 2013</b>	<b>CATEGORY: DELEGATED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>Head of Housing and Environmental Services</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>Beverly Wagstaffe (01283 228769)</b>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013-2018</b>	<b>REF:</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCS01</b>

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## **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1 Members approve the proposed draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy, at Appendix A, as a basis for wider consultation.
- 1.2 That authority is given for the Head of Housing and Environmental Services in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to agree any minor amendments to the draft strategy arising from wider consultation prior to implementation.
- 1.3 That any significant issues arising out of the consultation process are reported back to the Committee for approval.

## **2. Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 To bring before Committee an updated Homelessness Prevention Strategy to comply with the Homelessness Act 2002.

## **3. Content**

- 3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires housing authorities to take a long-term strategic approach to managing homelessness. They are required to carry out reviews in their districts, taking account of the activities and services available to tackle homelessness. Each Authority must draw up a strategy for combating and managing homelessness, based on a review.
- 3.2 This is South Derbyshire District Council's third Review and Strategy. Since 2003 the Council has worked closely with partners seeking to meet the needs of those who present themselves as homeless or at risk of being homeless. In recent years the Council has moved towards more proactive working seeking to prevent homelessness. The outcome is that the Council is seeing more people present themselves when 'at risk' of becoming homeless rather than when actually homeless. This is seen as a positive step change in service provision as the earlier people present themselves the more likely homelessness can be prevented.

- 3.3 As part of that preventative role the Council now routinely offers benefit checks and, where appropriate, referral to Derbyshire Housing Aid for debt advice; and delivers an “out of hours” homelessness service on behalf of the other seven Derbyshire Councils. The Council has recently developed a scheme in partnership with P3Charity to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for those families who have lost their home. It is envisaged that this project will reduce the Council’s expenditure whilst providing more suitable temporary accommodation, particularly for those households with children.
- 3.4 Looking ahead to the period 2013 to 2018 a key challenge for the Council will be to reduce homelessness at a time when there is significant economic difficulty, cuts to public funds and changes to welfare benefits.
- 3.5 The review, undertaken with the benefit of consultation with partners, has identified that it would be more beneficial to focus on a small number of significant key areas for improvement rather than trying to spread limited resources across a larger number of areas. The following are considered to be the key issues for the new Homelessness Prevention Strategy to address:-
- Reduce homelessness for single people aged 16-35 years as there is a shortage of suitable accommodation in the District for this group (i.e. 1-bedroom properties); changes to the Local Housing Allowance means a potential reduction in benefits may restrict access to affordable accommodation in the private sector.
  - Reduce under occupancy in the social rented sector as households with a spare bedroom may be impacted by the social size criteria reduction.
  - Ensure that accommodation and support is available to those who experience domestic abuse. The outcome of a service review by Derbyshire County Council has meant changes to the service provider structure. Along with County colleagues we need to monitor this new arrangement and its effect on service delivery.
  - Develop the role of the private rented sector. Some landlords may be willing to take a commercial decision to accept a lower rent from those in receipt of housing benefit or enter into a lease with the Council to avoid defaults in rents and reduce void periods.
- 3.6 Subject to Members agreement, the proposal is to consult wider with the community and partners on the proposed Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013-2018 (appendix A).

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 Monies to support implementation of this strategy are allocated from the Homelessness Resource Grant as well as funding secured through partnership working with other agencies.

#### **5. Corporate Implications**

- 5.1 The Homelessness Prevention Strategy supports delivery of the Council’s Housing Strategy and Corporate Plan to deliver a range of housing provision and services that address community requirements.

## **6. Community Implications**

- 6.1 The Homelessness Prevention Strategy seeks to contribute to the delivery of the Government's objectives to reduce homelessness at a national level. The Strategy also aims to ensure South Derbyshire's residents have access to affordable accommodation and support to sustain a home.